

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for operating a computer to facilitate a choice of a financing product for financing an energy-related asset, said method comprising the steps of:

prompting a customer to input into the computer information describing the energy-related asset ~~for which financing is being sought~~ being financed, wherein the energy-related asset including at least one of a power generating facility, a refinery, a mine, and a pipeline;

prompting the customer to input into the computer responses to a plurality of questions regarding requirements for financing the energy-related asset;

analyzing the information inputted into the computer by the customer; and

recommending to the customer based on the analyzed information a type of financing ~~to be used by the customer~~ for financing the energy-related asset, wherein the financing types include a financing project, a high yield debt, leasing, a project common equity, a limited partnership, a private equity and a preferred equity.

2. (currently amended) A method according to Claim 1 further comprising the step of:

~~displaying a computer generated screen listing the financing types;~~

enabling the customer to select a financing type to be evaluated by the computer; and

determining whether the selected financing type is the recommended financing type.

3. (currently amended) A method according to Claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

enabling the customer to select a financing type to be evaluated by the computer including a project common equity;

accessing an equity valuation tool [[if]] when the customer inputs project common equity as the financing type; and

calculating an equity valuation using the equity valuation tool and information inputted by the customer, wherein the calculated equity valuation relates to the energy-related asset.

4. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 3 further comprising for a project common equity financing type selection, prompting the customer to provide information describing the energy-related asset including an energy output of the asset.

5. (previously presented) A method according to claim 4 wherein the energy-related asset is a power generation plant, and the information provided by the customer describing the energy-related asset includes power plant information, current financing information, projected electricity prices and projected fuel costs.

6. (original) A method according to Claim 5 wherein default values are available for at least one of projected electricity prices and projected fuel costs, when specific values are not provided.

7. (original) A method according to Claim 3 further comprising the step of displaying a computer generated screen describing a selected financing type.

8. (previously presented) A method according to Claim 1, wherein prompting the customer to input responses comprises the steps of:

displaying a computer generated screen listing a plurality of background questions relating to the financing requirement; and

displaying a computer generated screen listing a plurality of financing specific questions.

9. (currently amended) A method according to Claim 8, wherein the background questions relating to the financing requirement comprise at least one of the country where

financing is required, which energy related business is the financing for, is the financing required for an operating asset, are [[U.S.]] taxes in the United States currently being paid by the customer, is the customer interested in either of off-balance sheet or non-recourse financing, and is the customer interested in structured debt such as high yield debt or subordinated debt.

10. (currently amended) A method according to Claim 8, wherein the financing specific questions comprise at least one of amount of financing, selling or optimizing equity position, willing to share control, upside potential and residuals of the asset, willing to subordinate equity distribution to a preferred equity investor, willing to be contacted regarding the financing, early stage pre-IPO (Initial Public Offering) company or company in early stage of corporate cycle and interested in financing senior to common equity but junior to lenders and trade creditors.

11. (currently amended) A computer for facilitating a selection of a financing product for financing an energy-related asset, said computer programmed to:

prompt a customer to provide information related to a financing requirement;

prompt a customer to input information describing the energy-related asset ~~for which financing is being sought~~ being financed, wherein the energy-related asset including at least one of a power generating facility, a refinery, a mine, and a pipeline;

prompt the customer to input responses to a plurality of questions regarding requirements for financing the energy-related asset;

analyze the information inputted by the customer; and

recommend to the customer based on the analyzed information a type of financing ~~to be used by the customer~~ for financing the energy-related asset, wherein the financing types include a financing project, a high yield debt, leasing, a project common equity, a limited partnership, a private equity and a preferred equity.

12. (currently amended) A computer according to Claim 11 further programmed to:

~~display a computer generated screen listing the financing types;~~

enable the customer to select a financing type to be evaluated; and

determine whether the selected financing type is the recommended financing type.

13. (currently amended) A computer according to Claim 11 wherein the computer is further programmed to:

enable the customer to select a financing type to be evaluated including a project common equity;

access an equity valuation tool [[if]] when the customer inputs project common equity as the financing type; and

calculate an equity valuation using the equity valuation tool and information inputted by the customer, wherein the calculated equity valuation relates to the energy-related asset.

14. (previously presented) A computer according to Claim 13 wherein for a project common equity financing type selection, said computer displays, to the customer, a prompt to enter criteria describing the energy-related asset including an energy output of the asset.

15. (previously presented) A computer according to claim 14 wherein the prompt is an interface to a valuation tool for power generation plants, and the criteria including at least one of power plant information, current financing information, projected electricity prices and projected fuel costs.

16. (original) A computer according to Claim 15 wherein default values for at least one of projected electricity prices and projected fuel costs are available.

17. (original) A computer according to Claim 13, whereupon a selection of a financing type by the customer, said computer programmed to display, to the customer, a computer generated screen describing the selected financing type.

18. (original) A computer according to Claim 11, wherein to prompt the customer to provide information, said computer:

displays a computer generated screen listing a plurality of background questions relating to the financing requirement; and

displays a computer generated screen listing a plurality of financing specific questions upon entry of answers to background questions.

19. (currently amended) A computer according to Claim 18, wherein the background questions relating to the financing requirement comprise at least one of the country where financing is required, which energy related business is the financing for, is the financing required for an operating asset, are [[U.S.]] taxes in the United States currently being paid by the customer, is the customer interested in either of off-balance sheet or non-recourse financing, and is the customer interested in structured debt such as high yield debt or subordinated debt.

20. (currently amended) A computer according to Claim 18, wherein the financing specific questions comprise at least one of amount of financing, selling or optimizing equity position, willing to share control, upside potential and residuals of the asset, willing to subordinate equity distribution to a preferred equity investor, willing to be contacted regarding the financing, early stage pre-IPO (Initial Public Offering) company or company in early stage of corporate cycle and interested in financing senior to common equity but junior to lenders and trade creditors.

21.-44. (cancelled)

45. (currently amended) Apparatus for facilitating a selection of a financing product for financing an energy-related asset, said apparatus comprising:

means for prompting a customer to input information describing the energy-related asset ~~for which financing is being sought~~ being financed, wherein the energy-related asset including at least one of a power generating facility, a refinery, a mine, and a pipeline;

means for prompting the customer to input responses to a plurality of questions regarding requirements for financing the energy-related asset;

means for analyzing the information inputted into the computer by the customer; and

means for recommending to the customer based on the analyzed information a type of financing ~~to be used by the customer~~ for financing the energy-related asset, wherein the financing types include a financing project, a high yield debt, leasing, a project common equity, a limited partnership, a private equity and a preferred equity.

46. (currently amended) Apparatus according to Claim 45 further comprising:

~~means for displaying a computer generated screen listing the financing types;~~

means for enabling the customer to select a financing type to be evaluated; and

means for determining whether the selected financing type is the recommended financing type.

47. (currently amended) Apparatus according to Claim 45 further comprising:

means for enabling the customer to select a financing type to be evaluated including a project common equity;

means for accessing an equity valuation tool ~~[[if]]~~ when the customer inputs project common equity as the financing type; and

means for calculating an equity valuation using the equity valuation tool and information inputted by the customer, wherein the calculated equity valuation relates to the energy-related asset.

48. (previously presented) Apparatus according to Claim 47 further comprising for project common equity financing type selection, said means for prompting the customer to provide information describing the energy-related asset including an energy output of the asset.

49. (previously presented) Apparatus according to Claim 48 wherein the energy-related asset comprises a power generating facility, and the information provided by the customer describing the energy-related asset includes plant size, a heat rate, a percentage of revenues under contract, a number of years remaining under contract, a remaining term of the existing debt, an outstanding principal, interest rate, electricity prices and an annual rate of increase, and projections of prices and projected fuel costs including an escalator.

50. (original) Apparatus according to Claim 49 wherein information for valuation of a facility comprises default values for at least one of electricity prices and projected fuel prices.

51. (original) Apparatus according to Claim 45 wherein said means for prompting the customer to provide information comprises means for displaying a computer generated screen listing a plurality of questions, including at least one of background questions and financing specific questions relating to the customers financing requirement.

52. (currently amended) Apparatus according to Claim 51 wherein the background questions comprise at least one of the country where financing is required, which energy related business is the financing for, is the financing required for an operating asset, are [[U.S.]] taxes in the United States currently being paid by the customer, is the customer interested in either of off-balance sheet or non-recourse financing, and is the customer interested in structured debt such as high yield debt or subordinated debt.

53. (currently amended) Apparatus according to Claim 51 wherein the financing specific questions comprise at least one of amount of financing, selling or optimizing equity position, willing to share control, upside potential and residuals of the asset, willing to subordinate equity distribution to a preferred equity investor, willing to be contacted regarding the financing, early stage pre-IPO (Initial Public Offering) company or company in early stage of corporate cycle and interested in financing senior to common equity but junior to lenders and trade creditors.

54.-63. (cancelled)